

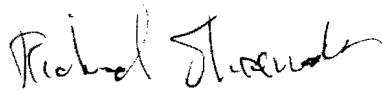
***Cardinal Communications Operational Plan 2013***

**An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public relations, advertising, and marketing have traditionally fallen under one umbrella of communications. In recent years, young professionals graduating with one of these degrees have treated these industries almost interchangeably in their career search. With the interchangeability of these industries and the even more recent introduction of social media and instant communication, these industries have moved from just falling under the same umbrella to merging into one industry. This merger is known as integrated marketing communications. The purpose of integrated marketing communications is to present a unified message to a target audience. In order to do this, public relations, advertising, brand promotion, marketing, social media and design must learn to listen and communicate with each other and their publics effectively.

As the industry changes, so do large and small public relations and advertising agencies nationwide. As the executive director of Cardinal Communications, Ball State University's student-run creative communications agency, I saw a need for my agency to begin matching this industry transition.

In order to determine how to best mirror this industry transition, I created this operational plan. This plan is key right now because Cardinal Communications and the American Advertising Federation (AAF) will be combining office spaces in August of 2013. This communal space will be part of the new Holden Strategic Communication Center in Ball State's Arts and Journalism Building. Although the two organizations serve two different purposes, this plan will outline guidelines for how both organizations can be productive both independently and together in the communal space.

In order to create this operational plan, two other Cardinal Communications leaders and I interviewed representatives from three professional public relations agencies. I also conducted interviews with three different student-run agency directors from across the country. Situational analyses were created based on the primary research and adjustments are and will continue to be made within Cardinal Communications.

In addition, a Cardinal Communications member interviewed the leaders of AAF to determine their overall vision and logistical needs for the Holden Strategic Communications Center. I summarized this interview and then the 3-member leadership team created a guidebook of rules and standards for the new space.

The target audience for this plan includes future leaders and members of Cardinal Communications and AAF and their advisers. The final plan will be presented to CCIM and Department of Journalism officials along with the future leaders of Cardinal Communications. I believe that the research and recommendations in this plan will bring continued success to future leaders of CC. The connections made with industry professionals and leaders of other student-run agencies during the research phase of this plan are invaluable and should be nurtured from this point forward.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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As stated in the abstract, the purpose of creating this operational plan was to dive into the world of professional and student-run agencies to determine how to continue improving Cardinal Communications, Ball State University's student-run creative communications agency. By conducting research, compiling information and making recommendations, I learned a great deal about the public relations industry, communicating with others and about myself, in general.

When interviewing representatives from professional agencies, I learned that although Cardinal Communications is impressive and unique in their eyes, the organization still has work to do to increase its credibility and prove that its members deserve full-time agency employment over other candidates who have not had student-run agency experience. Professionals are also very willing to serve as mentors to college students. I experienced this in high school through job shadowing, but I hadn't as much in college until this project.

My absolute favorite part of the entire project was interviewing and bouncing ideas off of other student-run agency directors. They are much more similar to Cardinal Communications than I ever imagined. Because there are less than forty of us in the country, it is easy to forget that they exist at times. These agencies are also spread out across the country, so there aren't many opportunities for all of us to come together often. Many of the other agencies exchange contact information at the PRSSA National Conference. Cardinal Communications has not been present at this conference for at least two years, so we are lacking on the student-run agency networking side.

I wish I would have discovered how knowledgeable and helpful the other student-run agencies are because I would have created a student-run agency director Facebook group or other type of forum earlier this year. Although, I am out of time to effectively carry this out, I am in the process of turning this project over to the 2013-14 executive director. I think this is the perfect opportunity to not only gather valuable advice but to also continue establishing Cardinal Communications as a front runner in the student-run agency world.

Finally, I learned how difficult it is to collaborate and create rules for a shared space. Collaboration with AAF was difficult at times due to communication barriers in scheduling, leadership transition and independent goals for each organization. This is to be expected with any change in organizational function. Compromise is not easy, but it is one of the most valuable skills needed for success in business and personal situations. The rules included in this operational plan are subject to change. Our leadership team struggled to create concrete rules for next year when it is obvious that unforeseen circumstances will arise each day. As we often say in Cardinal Communications, this is a learning experience and that is how future leaders of CC will have to look at this operational plan. There will be changes, but a solid foundation has been laid.

Overall, I believe that the research included in this plan is invaluable. The hope is that future leadership, both from AAF and Cardinal Communications, will use this format as a springboard for additional primary research with student and industry professionals. When I began creating this plan, I knew that Cardinal Communications was something special, but after conducting this research, I have even higher hopes for what the agency can achieve. I hope that this plan will assist in Cardinal Communications continuing to run with innovative ideas and the establishment of itself as an industry leader.

## **Professional Agency Interviews**

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After speaking with three nationally recognized public relations, advertising and branding agencies in Indianapolis and Minneapolis, strengths and areas for improvement for Cardinal Communications were determined. These interviews were conducted with Jennifer Dzwonar, Principal at Borshoff in Indianapolis, Ind.; Rod Porter, Vice President of Client Relations at Bohlsen Group in Indianapolis, Ind.; and Laura Mastbergen, Human Resources Assistant at Olson in Minneapolis, Minn. The interviews focused on agency structure, specifically pertaining to the incorporation of public relations with advertising, social media and video; gaining credibility as a student-run agency; and creating an agency handbook with ethical standards.

In discussing agency structure, questions focused on methods of balancing public relations and advertising as well as incorporating creative and social media aspects into account teams. According to all three agencies, the balance of public relations and advertising comes naturally with client needs. For example, Porter explains that Bohlsen Group went from “practicing pure public relations to being a more conventional advertising agency simply based on client needs.”

Because client needs can’t always be predicted, Bohlsen Group emphasizes the importance of letting potential employees know that their growth will be based on work ethic and incoming business requests. As long as all agency employees are flexible and well versed in several areas, the advertising and public relations balance is manageable and effective. Integration of the two industries should be driven by client needs, not by agency desire. The structure of an agency should shift in accordance with the needs of its business prospects.

All agencies mentioned that if part of a client’s needs fall outside the scope of the agency, it is the agency’s responsibility to recommend a high quality, outside firm or company to execute those tasks. Passing off client work that is better suited for a competitor builds an agency’s credibility and creates friendly relationships with surrounding companies. These friendly “trade-offs” have the potential to bring in more business in the future. For example, Olson sometimes gives intensive advertising work to its better-suited, partner agency. Similarly, Bohlsen Group outsources a majority of its creative work. These outside companies speak highly of Bohlsen and Olson, which, at the end of the day, brings them more projects that are within the scope of their work.

Another topic that all three agency representatives agreed upon was the importance of young professionals having the ability to effectively use social media. Borshoff lists social media as a “main tool in our tool kit with more than 50 percent of our team working on it.” Olson connects social media to its creative process and puts it on the table from the very beginning. Porter from Bohlsen Group believes that social media should “permeate the agency.”

Social media is so critical in brand development that professional agencies feel that student-run agencies could potentially find their niche in the industry by providing social media strategies and advice. By simply growing up in the millennial generation, professionals feel that students have an inherent knowledge of social media that the average businessperson lacks. Social media proficiency is inherent to 18-25 year olds where it can be like learning a foreign language for older generations.

Cardinal Communications has absorbed this advice and put it into action in its own practices by restructuring its digital team so that social media can better “permeate”

the organization. Instead of funneling all social media client requests to the digital team, account teams now handle the social media for their individual clients, which includes day-to-day content creation and maintenance. The digital team will now be solely responsible for developing fundamental social media plans and over-arching campaigns. This will greatly increase the number of account coordinators exposed to social media. The switch has proven to not only be more efficient but to provide a more solid learning experience to all Cardinal Communications members.

Other suggestions for increasing credibility and finding a niche in the public relations industry include presenting clients with an up-to-date reel including past work, goals, accomplishments and processes. According to Olson, it may also be beneficial to choose clients in various industries to begin building a wider client base. Overall, professionals suggest that student-run agencies determine what they do well and sell that specific skill instead of doing a mediocre job at a variety of things. Bohlsen Group reminds student-run agencies that aiming for large, well-known brands is not always the best strategy. Porter emphasizes that smaller accounts with the ability to be instructive are much more valuable than larger accounts, which will take up more time with less of an opportunity to learn.

This advice has proven to be true within Cardinal Communications. Generally, CC has benefited from working with smaller accounts because they have more time to provide the organization with feedback so that they can actually implement CC's recommendations. For example, Cardinal Communications took on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS), a large, well-known brand, during the fall of 2012. Although the IMS account team worked diligently to provide solid market research data and creative pieces, the client was unable to provide CC with feedback in an effective or timely manner. Although both parties wanted the relationship to work, neither party was in a position to make the relationship mutually beneficial. Cardinal Communications has since stayed committed to working with clients that can maintain a mutually beneficial relationship.

According to the interview feedback, the best ways to display Cardinal Communications, or other time spent with a student-run agency, on a resume include making the experience data and results driven as well as basing listed tasks on individual output. Real-world agencies are more willing to hire a member of a student-run agency for higher placement if he or she can prove that they "completed real work for real clients all the way from strategy to execution," according to Olson.

Finally, it was discovered that these three agencies are unable to release their individual handbooks or codes of ethics. All three agencies mentioned that their in-house codes are based on the PRSA Code of Ethics. Olson points out that its handbook is less important to its function than its six pillars for success and evaluation. These six pillars include:

1. Connected: Involved
2. Fearless: Never back down
3. Strategic: Core to success
4. Accountable: Personal responsibility
5. Innovative
6. Indispensable: Trusted adviser for clients because we understand their needs

Based on these interviews, Cardinal Communications is able to more accurately structure its agency to mirror the attitudes and trends of real-world agencies. Cardinal Communications has and will continue improvements based on structure, increasing credibility and creating a handbook.

The balance between public relations and advertising will not be forced but will be expected to come to the organization naturally. The director of client relations will still pitch advertising clients, but if the interest is not there, Cardinal Communications will continue to focus on attaining clients who do have interest in Cardinal Communications' services regardless of industry. Cardinal Communications is committed to creating a learning experience for its members and working with clients who are focused on nurturing mutually beneficial relationships.

In order to increase and maintain credibility, Cardinal Communications will focus on improving and maintaining an up-to-date agency portfolio to show clients. Cardinal Communications should also work with its Professional Development Committee (PDC) to better train its members on how to represent Cardinal Communications on a resume, cover letter and in interviews. A step toward providing this knowledge began with a general meeting training session focused on selling the Cardinal Communications experience.

A handbook and operational plan is also in the process of being created to ensure that members are following a set of standards, both from an ethical and operational standpoint. It is believed that the guidance received from these interviews will continue to lead Cardinal Communications in the right direction. Complete transcriptions of these interviews can be found in Appendix A.

## **Student-run Agency Interviews**

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According to the PRSSA website, there are 34 nationally accredited, student-run agencies in the country. Cardinal Communications is joined on that list by agencies that have proven to have a solid PRSSA/PRSA connection, high level of professionalism and effective structure. In order to get a better understanding of how these agencies function, interviews were conducted with Brittanie Arnett, agency director at Biola University's 6th Street in La Mirada, CA; Mirko Mandic, agency director at The Ohio State University's The PRactice in Columbus, Ohio; and Erica Swoish, agency director at Michigan State University's Hubbell Connections in East Lansing, Mich. The interviews focused on agency structure; incorporation of varying skill sets including advertising, public relations, social media and video; relationship with PRSSA and how to hold members accountable.

6<sup>th</sup> Street, Hubbell Connections, The PRactice and Cardinal Communications function with a similar core structure. All four organizations are led by an executive staff, teams are led by account executives and the bulk of client work is completed by account coordinators. The titles of these positions vary, but the function of each position remains consistent. Cardinal Communications is significantly larger than the other agencies, which have less than 50 members and approximately nine clients each. Currently, Cardinal Communications has 81 members and 23 clients.

Although the basic hierarchies of these agencies are similar to that of Cardinal Communications, their incorporation of social media, creative and video is a bit different. When asked about incorporation of social media, creative and video into the agency structure, 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Hubbell Connections both voiced that they were still working on hiring members with those skill sets. Currently, Hubbell outsources most of its creative and video work. 6<sup>th</sup> Street keeps creative in-house or gives it to the practicum portion of the agency, which is a regular class. Both agencies have 1-3 members working on social media but no teams function strictly as social media teams. Neither agency has a video team.

The PRactice is more similar to Cardinal Communications in its incorporation of social media. "Everyone at The PRactice does social media. If someone on an account team can handle the graphic design then they will work on that too," said Mandic, agency director at The PRactice. The PRactice strives to keep the work from its "special teams" in-house as well. As Bohlsen pointed out during the professional agency interviews, social media should permeate organization—a model that both The PRactice and Cardinal Communications work to mirror.

An interesting element to The PRactice's executive staff is its incorporation of a finance director. Knowledge in the financial area is something that Cardinal Communications is lacking, so it would be beneficial to look into hiring someone with this skill set. At The PRactice, the finance director is in charge of billing, budget and coordinating invoices.

Integration of skill sets at the other universities is different than at Ball State based on curriculum. For example, Hubbell Connections and Ohio State University do not have a specific public relations major. At Michigan State, students can study journalism with a focus in advertising or communications. Because students cannot declare a specific public relations major, they have a more even split of advertising and public relations students than Cardinal Communications. Similarly, Ohio State



University's "public relations" students are within a strategic communications program. According to Mandic, they don't have a strict advertising major either. If someone is interested in advertising, they are encouraged to major in strategic communications and take advertising courses as electives. These limited options in areas of study cause most students within the agency to follow the same academic path.

On the other hand, 6th Street's agency began as a practicum class. The 2012-13 academic year is its first year as a stand-alone agency. All Biola University students are required to take the practicum portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street experience. The most dedicated students in the practicum class may then move on to participate in the student-run agency portion of 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The class requirement aspect gives 6<sup>th</sup> Street a wider variety of journalism students with different focuses. The downside to this variety is less motivation from members and more university involvement.

These agencies also have a different relationship with their PRSSA chapters than Cardinal Communications has with the Ball State Chapter of PRSSA. Although Cardinal Communications is nationally accredited by PRSSA, the two organizations work independently; PRSSA involvement is encouraged but not required. On the other hand, every member of Hubbell Connections and The PRactice must be "said" members of PRSSA in order to work for the agency. Michigan State and Ohio State's PRSSA Chapters are used as the main recruiting pool for agency members. In addition, Hubbell is recognized as a supplementary part of MSU's PRSSA Chapter, so all client payment goes into the PRSSA account even though it was earned independently by the agency.

Both directors at Michigan State and Biola sit on the boards for their respective PRSSA chapters, which they both cite as an unusual circumstance for student-run agency directors. The overlap of these directors' involvement in both organizations can sometimes cause lines to be blurred between the agencies and PRSSA chapters. Swoish and Arnette mentioned that they hope to have more of an independent presence in the future. All three agencies were surprised at the independent relationships upheld between Cardinal Communications and Ball State's PRSSA.

Hubbell Connections, 6th Street and The PRactice follow the PRSSA Code of Ethics first and foremost in the development of agency rules and standards. 6<sup>th</sup> Street doesn't have its own handbook because, as a practicum class, it simply falls under the course description assigned to it by Biola University. The PRactice functions within the guidelines of its own handbook. The PRactice and Hubbell Connections have their own handbooks as well. Hubbell's director, Erica Swoish, was generous enough to give Cardinal Communications' directors access to its handbook online. This handbook will allow Cardinal Communications to more successfully make amendments to its existing policies.

Some of the ideas gained from Hubbell Connections' handbook include the implementation of Cardinal Communications "points," hosting a review meeting with members at the end of each semester and asking that account directors reapply upon returning from year-to-year. Cardinal Communications points will be part of a new incentivized system that rewards members for exemplary behavior instead of only pointing out the negative.

Hubbell also has a stronger disciplinary policy and procedure that Cardinal Communications would like to mirror. They follow the three-strike policy that CC has set in place while also requiring that if someone resigns without following a two-week notice

policy, time spent at the agency must be removed from the individual's resume. These are valuable pieces of the Hubbell Connections handbook that Cardinal Communications would like to include for 2013-14. Cardinal Communications will also be adding an appeals board to add fairness and weight to its termination process.

None of the agencies pay their members. 6th Street offers class credit; Hubbell and The PRactice simply offer the experience. All agencies agree that it would be easier to keep members motivated if a solid, incentivized system was in place.

Cardinal Communications and the other three interviewed agencies gain members and clients in a similar manner. Most clients are gained through word-of-mouth and existing client referrals. The majority of clients that all student-run agencies work with are nonprofits. Cardinal Communications is the only agency to charge its nonprofit agencies. All agencies seem to struggle with giving themselves enough credit to charge the amount of money that they feel is deserved. There is a constant challenge in putting a dollar amount on the value of a learning experience.

Value is important to all four agencies regarding the hiring of members. Cardinal Communications and the three interviewed agencies all require an application and interview process for its members. Some agencies put more emphasis on the importance of the interview than others, but all of them have some type of screening process in place. Hiring cycles vary from agency to agency though. For example, Cardinal Communications hires at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters whereas The PRactice hires throughout the year as needed based on influx of client projects.

After conducting all of these interviews, there was a general consensus among all four agency directors that there is a need for some type of network that can connect student-run agencies across the country. The only idea that has been presented so far is the creation of a student-run agency director Facebook group or page. This group would be used as an online forum for brainstorming, questions and the exchange of ideas and connections from agency to agency. Firm directors from Cardinal Communications and Ohio State University are working to take the lead on this project so that it can be implemented at the beginning of next year.

Complete interview transcriptions can be found in Appendix B.

## **Situational Analysis**

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To assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Cardinal Communications, two situational analyses were compiled. The first evaluates Cardinal Communications' position in relationship to professional agencies. The second evaluates Cardinal Communications' position in relationship to student-run agencies.

### **Cardinal Communications SWOT in relationship to professional agencies:**

*Strengths:* Competitive pricing; Individualized client attention; Strong passion and motivation

*Weaknesses:* Quick turnaround in membership (members are only in organization for four years at the most); Limited real-world experience; Poor writing skills

*Opportunities:* Ability to provide fresh perspective; Hone inherent social media expertise; Convenient location in relationship to Indianapolis and Muncie

*Threats:* Poor economy; Full-time agency positions are requiring in-house internships regardless of student-run agency experience

### **Cardinal Communications SWOT in relationship to student-run agencies:**

*Strengths:* Large number of dedicated members and mutually beneficial client relationships; Department allows freedom; Incentives available for members;

*Weaknesses:* Lacking in advertising students; Inexperienced in client relations (billing, contracts)

*Opportunities:* Improved credibility and quality of work based on state-of-the-art Holden Center; Continued recruitment of varied majors; Creation of student-run agency network

*Threats:* Independence from PRSSA could cause less recognition and awards from PRSA; Smaller student-run agencies may be seen as agencies who value quality over quantity

## **Holden Strategic Communications Center Opportunities**

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When Cardinal Communications received word that it would be sharing a space with Ball State's American Advertising Federation (AAF) in the Holden Strategic Communications Center, new opportunities and potential challenges quickly arose. How would the two organizations share a space? What would happen to the identities of each? How could Cardinal Communications and AAF most effectively work together? Questions ranged from minor logistical issues to larger, fundamental concerns. To address these questions, Cardinal Communications created a three-person leadership team to conduct research on professional and student-run agencies across the country. The goal of this research was to gather information on how Cardinal Communications can improve independently and to also determine how AAF and Cardinal Communications can most successfully capitalize on the move into the Holden Strategic Communications Center together.

Based on the interview conducted with AAF and two other collaborative meetings, Cardinal Communications now has a solid grasp on AAF's mission and goals, specifically regarding preparation and execution of its annual competition and fundraising. On a fundamental level, Cardinal Communications and AAF will continue functioning as independent organizations with new opportunities for in-office brainstorming and exchange of ideas, which will assist in helping each organization better achieve its independent goals. The hope is that this new space will facilitate additional collaboration on Department of Journalism events similar to the internship panel that has been hosted by CC, AAF and PRSSA for the last two years. In addition, there is potential for Cardinal Communications and AAF to come together in a conjoined project such as a shared client or fundraising project.

It is not only important for AAF and Cardinal Communications to thrive independently and as integrated industries, but it is also imperative for AAF and Cardinal Communications to effectively exist together in the Holden Strategic Communications Center from a logistical standpoint. In order to ensure that AAF and Cardinal Communications share the space in a fair and professional manner, the leaders of Cardinal Communications interviewed the leaders of AAF to determine AAF's day-to-day office needs. Based on this interview, Cardinal Communications leadership, with the approval of AAF, outlined the following standards for the Holden Center. The complete interview transcription can be found in Appendix C.

## **Holden Strategic Communications Center Guidelines**

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All members of both organizations will sign a form of agreement to the following rules.

### **University Policies:**

All University policies must be followed. This includes no alcohol on the premise at any time.

### **Conference Room Policies:**

1. AAF and CC members have first access to office conference rooms for client and team work over class projects.
2. Mandatory conference room time for Cardinal Communications:
  - a. Monday nights: 9:30-10:45 p.m. (12-15 people)Mandatory conference room for American Advertising Federation:
  - . Thursday nights: 7-10 p.m. (12-15 people)

NOTE: All other team meeting times for AAF and CC will be agreed upon at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year by executives of both organizations. These times will be tracked on a monthly calendar.

### **Hours of Operation and Access Policies:**

1. General office hours will be from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
2. All members will enter with card swipe during and after business hours.
3. Guests may only enter with a member of AAF and/or CC during and after business hours. He or she must sign in and out on the guest sign-in sheet. Only one guest per person.
4. Final CC membership list for card swipe access will be sent to the department by **September 1, 2013**. Executives will have prior access. A new list will be submitted in January with new CC member list.
5. Final AAF membership list for card swipe access will be sent to the department by **October 14, 2013**. Executives will have prior access.
6. Ball State student IDs cannot be given to other students for access.

### **Office Etiquette Policies:**

1. All Holden Center guests will be greeted by members of both organizations who are present in the office.
2. CC members may not enter the AAF private office without an AAF member present.
3. AAF members may not enter the CC private office without a CC member present.
4. CC and/or AAF information should not be saved on computer desktops. All information must be saved on each organization's individual server.
5. CC members may not access the AAF server.
6. AAF members may not access CC servers.
7. Atrium trays, trash, newspapers and other personal items should be disposed of properly and by the end of each business day.

8. Each organization will have specific drawers for supplies. Sharing of these items should be discussed between executives of both organizations.
9. Gain mutual consent when playing music during office hour.
10. Members should conduct themselves professionally in the office at all times. From 8 a.m to 5 p.m., members should be dressed in a manner that would be acceptable to potential new students, university representatives and clients.

### **Physical Space Rules and Policies**

1. Refrigerator contents will be removed every other Friday at 5 p.m. Members of both organizations must take initiative on this.
2. No sleeping in the office is allowed.
3. Front door should never be propped open with a door stop.
4. No negative talk about the department or college is allowed in the Holden Center.
5. No food or drinks are permitted near the technology including computers, television and projectors.
6. Office decorations can be hung up in common spaces if both organizations agree (i.e. holiday decor, motivational designs/posters, etc.)
7. Cardinal Communications' and AAF's phones will stay in their respective offices. Phones should only be answered by members of respective organizations.
8. Any supplies used in conference rooms (i.e. dry erase markers, pens, etc.) during meetings should be returned to specific offices.
9. Dry erase boards are to be erased every Friday.
10. If something goes wrong when it comes to space violations, each organization will report to their advisor and then the department.

## APPENDIX A: Professional Agency Transcriptions

**Jennifer Dzwonar, Principal at Borshoff, on Friday, Jan. 28, 2013 at 9:15 a.m.**

**CC Member:** *Hello Jennifer, thank you for taking my call today! As you know, I am the assistant director of Cardinal Communications, the student-run creative communications agency at Ball State. The university received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will now be sharing an office space with the American Advertising Federation (AAF). We will still be two separate organizations—just sharing a space. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in PR and media. To start the interview, can you breakdown the overall structure of your agency? I know Borshoff has five principals and approximately 57 employees, but can you elaborate a bit more?*

**Jennifer:** Yes, we are made up of five principals, and our teams are split up depending on projects. We are about half and half on media and PR. Our account people are broad and not on the same team. We like having our employees be on different teams because we want as little turnover as possible.

**CC:** *More specifically, how are teams split up?*

**J:** Principals oversee everything then a VP Senior AD leads the other ADs on projects and work with the creatives.

**CC:** *OK, this relates a lot to how Cardinal Comm. functions in that we have three execs, then account directors who lead the teams and work with our digital, creative and video teams. Moving on to the next question, where do social media and creative departments fit into your agency?*

**J:** Social media is very integrated. Over 50 percent of our team works with social media. Now the creative directors are at the table from the beginning. They come to client meetings from the beginning because they know the correct questions to ask to better understand the client needs for social media. Social media is another tool in our toolkit.

**B:** *How does your agency balance public relations and advertising? We are primarily PR, but hopefully working in the same office with AAF will help us integrate more advertising into our work, so how do you deal with this balance?*

**J:** Clients buy the expertise, we don't. They balance it because it is about what the client needs and wants. People don't just buy advertising anymore. It is either integrated or more PR, so the client balances this by what they come to us for and what we know we can do for them.

**B:** *Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to your company? What was your process in creating it?*

J: We follow the PRSA Code of Ethics and sometimes sign codes of ethics for the clients we are working with. We have our own in-house rules, but they all mainly fall under the PRSA Code of Ethics.

B: *What outlets do you use to keep up with the changing trends in communications?*

J: All of them. We use any and all outlets we can to keep up with the trends. All 57 employees read and absorb anything they can to make sure they are knowledgeable on what clients want and need at any particular time.

B: *In your opinion, how can we gain more credibility as a fully-functioning agency even though we are student-run?*

J: Build credibility. You are never going to change the fact that you are students and in some people's mind that is already a red flag. What you need to do is create your own metaphor. The best thing you can do is know who you are and what you do and be confident. Sell to people that it is hard to beat your price and that you are giving them some of the best students in the field and something completely different.

B: *Would you consider experience gained in Cardinal Communications to be as valuable as an internship or entry-level job? How could we improve to increase this value in your eyes?*

J: In our world, yes. Compared to an internship, yes, but the key is that members have to explain exactly what they did in Cardinal Communications. We still expect two internships but being able to explain what you know well is key. We don't expect you to know everything but being able to successfully get across what you know well is key.

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**Laura Mastbergen, Human Resources Assistant at OLSON, on Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2013 at 11 a.m.**

**CC Member: *Hello Laura, thank you for taking my call today. As you know, I am the assistant director of Cardinal Communications, the student-run creative communications agency at Ball State. The university received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will now be sharing an office space with AAF. We will still be two separate organizations—just sharing a space. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in PR and media. To start the interview, can you breakdown the overall structure of your Olson?***

Laura: Our Chicago headquarters is primarily PR, where here at our Minnesota office we started as advertising in the 1990s. Ultimately though, we are focused on the connections, not targets. We focus on connecting with people, their lifestyles and values via multiple



channels. To help ourselves keep up with the changing demands, we have beefed up our holistic offerings. For example, we grabbed Digg in 2010-2011.

***B: Where do social media and creative departments fit into your agency?***

L: Creative is not a department and should be used in all areas. Yes, there is a physical department but creative outlook in all areas is key. Social media falls under PR, and many tend to use it as a thing at the end. But with Olson it is on the table from the beginning to drive traffic to the web. Creative should be a concept used from the beginning in all aspects.

***B: How does your agency balance public relations and advertising?***

L: We would love if all our PR clients took advantage of traditional and multiple disciplines, but a lot of companies want that split up so all their eggs are not in the same basket. We are pushing to integrate more and be a trusted place for opportunities and be kept in their mind with what we can help them with. We also have a partner agency in case a client has something we cannot provide.

***B: Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to your company? What was your process in creating it?***

L: Values and things come from what has naturally emerged over the years. Vision and mission are made by the exec team, (i.e. CEO, CFO, etc.) but refreshed from time to time. We established six pillars of success in 2012. These are six things we feel employees need in order to be successful here. They are also a basis for evaluation.

1. Connected: Involved
2. Fearless: Never back down
3. Strategic: Core to success
4. Accountable: Personal responsibility
5. Innovative
6. Indispensable: Trusted adviser for clients because we understand their needs

***B: What outlets do you use to keep up with the changing trends in communications?***

L: It varies a lot depending on department. Digital with blogs and more sites is a big part of it.

***B: In your opinion, how can we gain more credibility as a fully-functioning agency even though we are student-run?***

L: So much work we already have done is displayed in light of our capabilities. We have a reel to show potential clients that we update constantly. It shows work, goals, accomplishments and processes from beginning to end. These equal results. We also strategically choose clients to help us build our credibility in different areas. Ex: Took on

a fast-food company to allow us to be more credible in the that type of fast-food industry.

***B: Would you consider experience gained in Cardinal Communications to be as valuable as an internship or entry-level job? How could we improve to increase this value in your eyes?***

L: Cardinal Communications is the first thing to list on your resume. Emphasize that it is real work for real clients from strategy to execution. Here at Olson, we want to know knowledge and do they have real experience. We like to see National Student Advertising on resumes.

We hope graduating seniors from Cardinal Communications apply! Applications will go up Friday.

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**Rod Porter, Vice President of Client Relations at BohlsenGroup, on Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.**

***CC Member: Hello Rod, I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. I've heard nothing but great things about Bohlsen from Kait and other CC members. I am the executive director of Cardinal Communications, Ball State's student-run creative communications agency. The university received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will be sharing an office space with AAF. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in the industry. To start the interview, can you breakdown the overall structure of your agency?***

R: The way we're structured is in part born out of our history. What we are is just a reflection of how the company has grown--whether that's right or wrong—I don't know. Vicki's background was in PR. She used to work at WTHR and then in New York. Bohlsen Group started out doing public relations for Author Solutions. From that point on, Vicki hired people as the business came in. We went from a pure PR firm to a more conventional ad agency simply based on client needs. Vicki had already done a great deal of events publicity, which helped us build our events/publicity side.

As far as structure goes, Vicki is the head of the company. Andy, in charge of events and entertainment, has a couple of account executives and a publicist. We also have a group of freelancers who work based on the season. Events and entertainment ramp up during the off-season for their very busy summer season.

Account execs and media specialists, just a step up from a publicist, work under me. Media specialists can do the shooting and editing of video too. Under all of these leadership positions are teams. One team works on our largest account--Author's Solution. There are also retail and account teams. Teams are given accounts that are similar in work and areas of interest. That way if a client comes to us wanting a specific type of work, we already have teams in place that are pretty well-versed and familiar with the type of work being requested.

***CC: Where do social media and creative departments fit into your agency?***

R: Everyone employed at Bohlsen is well-versed in social media. They just have to be. Some are extremely adept at it. Others are fairly adept at it. If we need to train a client in social media, we send one of our social media “experts.” For everything else, we depend on whoever is most available. We want everyone to have that knowledge. The knowledge of social media should permeate the organization.

We go out of house for design. This allows us to choose different designers for different projects. We like having that flexibility. We also have a copywriter on hand. She comes in and out as needed.

***CC: How does your agency balance public relations and advertising?***

R: Our reputation is pretty strong in public relations, so we get a lot of proposals. We are trying to build out the advertising side of it, which is a little harder to do. We are actively trying to seek that. Everything we do is driven by the work that comes in. We plug advertising in to whatever area needs work. We keep growing. We don’t get rid of people just because work isn’t specific to an employee’s background.

You have to have some people who are well enough versed in several areas that you can put them anywhere in the company. If you have specialty things that need to be done (website design or something like that) then you can hire out for that. When we hire people here we tell them that their growth will be based on their work ethic and the business that comes in. If an ad account comes in and someone has demonstrated an interest in that type of work then we are going to put the best person on the account to make the client succeed. You can’t promise work to people.

***CC: Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to your company? What was your process in creating it?***

R: Yes. It includes a social media policy that everyone signs. We put in input to our 3rd party HR company (tax forms, benefits, record keeping). We gave them information so they could tailor it to us. They had their framework set up and then we just added to it. You have to paint with a broad brush. Make sure to include social media! Don’t put it out there for everyone to look at. Everyone here signs a non-compete, non-disclosure.

***CC: In your opinion, how can we gain more credibility as a fully functioning agency even though we are student-run?***

R: It’s kind of difficult because if you show a client your portfolio of work, it isn’t representative of your employees at that current time. In an academic setting, students are constantly in and out. When we pitch, clients can be confident that the employees represented in the portfolio are still there. That is something CC would have to overcome because of your quick turnaround.

If I was a savvy businessperson, I would ask who worked on something in the portfolio and if they were still at the company. I would suspect that the type of advertising you do is going to be for small businesses because of the price and experience level required.

They will usually ask for specific examples in the RFP. For example, we include case studies that show similar projects to what the potential client is requesting to give them an idea of what they can expect. We try to make it relatable.

The biggest thing you have to sell is your knowledge of social media which just inherently students will just have over the average businessperson—keep that in mind. Don't get hung up on bigger accounts. Our biggest account presents some of the biggest problems. Quite frankly, some of the books we have to promote are not very good. Doing the publicity on those books is the best experience you can get in life because you have to take a crummy book and get it some publicity. If you figure that out, you're going to be so much better when you're working on your dream account. Small accounts teach you how to be creative.

I think small accounts that are instructive and teach you something are more valuable than a big account.

***CC: Would you consider experience gained in Cardinal Communications to be as valuable as an internship or entry-level job?***

R: Yeah, it at least gives you some real world experience with real clients. Some of our designers only had conceptual stuff at first—nothing had really ever been done. I noted that because they were lacking real work. I think Cardinal Communications would count as a first job. I always ask about someone's specific role in a project included in a portfolio. I think it's valuable and gives them more real world experience than an internship. It's less observation and more of your baby.

## **APPENDIX B: Student-Run Agency Interview Transcriptions**

**Erica Swoish, Agency Director at Hubbell Connections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, on Feb. 20, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.**

*Lily: Hello Erica, thank you for taking my call today! I am the executive director of Cardinal Communications, the student-run creative communications agency at Ball State University. The university recently received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will now be sharing an office space with AAF. We will still be two separate organizations—just sharing a space. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in PR and media.*

*Because you are also a student-run agency, I would guess that you face similar challenges and changes to those that we face here at Cardinal Communications. I thought today would be a great time to chat about both of our agencies and for me to understand how you function more specifically in comparison to us.*

*First, can you tell me a little bit more about Hubbell Connections.*

**Erica:** Hubbell Connections was started in 2006. I'm not sure of the original name. The older members don't even remember. There hasn't been great record keeping throughout the years. I pretty much started the agency from scratch when I came on a year and a half ago. I worked under our former director as an assistant director. There were a lot of things I wanted to change, so it was nice to be able to have the freedom to do so once I took the director position.

*L: So, how is the agency structured?*

**E:** We have approximately 40-50 members who were all selected with an application process. Our interviews are only for executive members. We are currently transitioning into interviewing associate members as well. Account teams include an AE who serves as the liaison between team members, clients and me. Account associates (less experienced members) carry out actual work for the clients by serving as general members of the account teams. AEs serve as leaders of the team. Oh, and our digital media manager updates our website.

*L: How many clients do you have?*

**E:** Nine clients. We have a pretty good mix of types of clients--nonprofit businesses, Studio of Performing Arts Center (a for-profit client), the genealogy department and other clients that I can't think of off the top of my head. They can all be viewed on our website at <http://hubbellconnections.com/>.

*L: Do you charge your clients?*

E: We work on a zero budget basis. We get any space that we need through the university. Self-promoting collateral is paid for through the university, and extra expenses are on us. We charge our for-profit clients \$50/semester. At first, clients weren't taking us seriously, so we had to charge them. Many of our clients are struggling businesses, so we have to be reasonable with our pricing.

***L: Are there benefits for upper-level management positions in your agency (directors, account supervisors)?***

E: Nope, absolutely not. With compensation, a professor would have to be involved, and we don't want that. We had roadblocks with internship credit too, so as of now, the benefit for being involved is strictly gaining experience.

***L: Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to Hubbell Connections? If so, what was your process in creating it?***

E: We base our handbook off the PRSSA Code of Ethics. We also have an online guide for members that I can give you access to. The password is "hubcon."

***L: What is your relationship with PRSSA?***

E: I sit on the executive board for our PRSSA chapter. Our PRSSA chapter is a registered student organization on-campus. And because they serve as the registered student organization, we don't have to. PRSSA is used solely for recruitment purposes. Most of the agency members, if not all, are "said" members of PRSSA. Most of our students come from PRSSA involvement. Right now, they hold our finances. Any checks made out to MSU from clients goes into the PRSSA money. I don't have control, so I have to go through three different people to be reimbursed.

***L: Do you have your own office space?***

E: PRSSA and AAF share an office at our school. Hubbell Connections works out of an office through the university.

***L: Can you break down your executive staff for me a little more?***

E: I have an account manager and a digital media manager. I couldn't do it all by myself. It's my first suggestion that you shouldn't try to do it yourself. The digital media manager has taken over the website, social media, blog and e-blasts. Our account manager is essentially like an assistant director. My idea was for it to be a little more robust than it actually turned out to be this year. We all meet with our leadership teams every other week.

***L: Is public relations a major at MSU?***

E: We don't have a public relations major. We are journalism majors with a PR or advertising focuses. This allows our members to come from different backgrounds, so the correct people can focus on PR or advertising projects. Our membership is an even split between communications and advertising. Most people interested in public relations are encouraged to choose the PR specialization

***L: How are assignments split up?***

E: Each week the director comes up with an assignment (release, pitch letter, media list, news angles, etc). The account executives split up the media that we contact and then they all pitch. Assignments switch every week. It allows everyone to have one of each in their portfolio. We just try to distribute it evenly based on clients. Each team focuses on the client and does that client's work. There are no extra teams like design. We base it on interests on the team but if the skill isn't there, I pick up the slack for those issues. We also outsource to talented students on campus with strong design or web skills.

***L: Do you interview all of your candidates?***

E: Account associates not being interviewed in the past has been detrimental. Account associates hired mid-semester were interviewed. We are still working to improve our interview process.

***L: How do you enforce your policies? Do you ask for assistance from the university?***

E: I don't use university resources because I've been able to establish authority within the organization on my own. Associate members don't have access to our resources after being terminated. I have established authority by writing bylaws for the agency. We have no power without any hard backing. We usually rely on Hubbell Points.

***L: What are Hubbell Points?***

Hubbell Points are connected through PRSSA. Through PRSSA, Hubbell Points are used to determine who gets first dibs on attending "special" activities. Account managers add the Hubbell Points on a Google doc. It's taking people an hour to write a few emails, so we've been looking at how much time these people are incurring. Do they have too many hours for what's going on? If this person said they were at a meeting, and they weren't at the meeting, how do we handle that? This is the purpose of Hubbell Points. We also follow the three write-up system that Cardinal Communications seems to follow too.

***L: I love the idea of Hubbell Points. I think this is something that I want to implement in CC. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Your feedback has been extremely helpful in not only giving us tips to improve our agency but to also in giving us a better understanding of how other student-run agencies are functioning.***

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**Brittanie Arnett, Agency Director at 6th Street PR, Biola University, La Mirada, CA, on Feb. 27, 2013 on Friday, Jan. 28, 2013 at 9:15 a.m.**

***Lily: Hello Brittanie, thank you for taking my call today! I am the executive director of Cardinal Communications, the student-run creative communications agency at Ball State University. The university recently received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will now be sharing an office space with AAF. We will still be two separate organizations—just sharing a space. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in PR and media.***

***Because you are also a student-run agency, I would guess that you face similar challenges and changes to those that we face here at Cardinal Communications. I thought today would be a great time to chat about both of our agencies and for me to understand how you function more specifically in comparison to us.***

***First, what is the overall structure of 6th Street?***

Brittanie: 6th Street started as a practicum class that everyone had to take. This year we've split from the class and are functioning more like an agency. We have an agency director, senior account executive, two account executives, creative director and ten staff members. Next semester we'll be expanding (hopefully) to have three senior account executives, six account executives and a larger staff.

***L: Where do social media and creative departments fit into your agency?***

B: We are currently revamping 6th Street's social media and website. In the past the director and senior account executive would run all social media but this year we have assigned a staff member to be responsible for all social media. For the creative department, we have a creative director who oversees creative materials on each campaign and also has a team of her own to produce the materials.

***L: Are there benefits for upper-level management positions in your agency such as payment or class credit?***

B: We don't get paid--not even the leaders. We do get class credit; however, it was part of everyone's curriculum when it was a practicum. The practicum is just a class now. The benefit is the experience that we're getting. We introduce it to people like this is the time to get experience before you get in the real world. One of my goals as an agency director is to make sure I am training other leaders on how to properly edit and lead a team.

***L: Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to 6th Street?***

B: 6th Street follows the PRSA Code of Ethics and the PRSSA guide for student-run firms. We also have to be in accordance with our university's mission statement.

***L: What is your affiliation with PRSSA?***



B: For our PRSSA chapter on Biola's campus, we aren't really affiliated with PRSSA. Originally, we started as a practicum class that all PR students had to take. We recently switched over so that it is its own separate function. We are our own student media. Our PRSSA members can be involved, but it's not like they have to. I went to the National Conference and many student-run chapters function with the PRSSA chapter. I sit on both, but that's unusual. It's possible because we have a small campus.

We are nationally affiliated through PRSSA. We are on their website as an affiliated agency that functions along with their ethics.

***L: What is your hiring process like for new members?***

B: All staff needs to fill out an application and go through an interview process with the current and incoming agency director. We try to hand pick our leaders (senior account executives, account executives) but we also accept applications and go through an interview process.

***L: How do you go about getting clients?***

B: We have our staff members do "client suggestions" where they do their own research and suggest their own clients that they think 6th Street would be able to represent. Each member then pitches that client to the agency director and assistant agency director. We go through all of them and see who might have potential. We reach out to the clients and set up client meetings.

Because of the impact we have made on these organizations, we also get client referrals. This semester we had to turn down four clients because we built up our reputation. We also have returning clients that we keep partnering with. The bulk is from staff and client recommendations.

***L: What types of clients do you have?***

B: We have nonprofit, on-campus, corporate and entertainment clients. We try to be as well-rounded with our clients as possible. We can't charge our clients. We are trying to move that direction. 6th Street didn't exist four years ago, so we are just trying to get our foot in the door.

***L: How do you hold your members accountable?***

B: Part of the reason that the agency split from the class is because people weren't working as hard for the agency as we needed. We ran into the laziness issue a lot. We don't really have a system of "discipline," but you can get fired. If there are any issues, we can ask them to leave. They have to recognize that they got fired from the agency.

We try to get to the bottom of it before we just terminate them. If it doesn't get better, we

don't really have a measuring block. We have a faculty advisor who treats 6th Street as her baby. She is very passionate about asking slackers to leave immediately.

***L: Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Your feedback has been extremely helpful in not only giving us tips to improve our agency but to also give us a better understanding of how other student-run agencies are functioning.***

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**Mirko Mandic, Agency Director at The PRactice, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, on April 2, 2013**

***Lily: Hi, Mirko, thank you for taking my call today! I am the executive director of Cardinal Communications, the student-run creative communications agency at Ball State University. The university recently received a donation to create a new strategic communications center for the Department of Journalism. With this donation, we will now be sharing an office space with AAF. We will still be two separate organizations—just sharing a space. This is a great opportunity for our organization to look into the structure of how we function and see if we are mirroring the changing trends in PR and media.***

***Because you are also a student-run agency, I would guess that you face similar challenges and changes to those that we face here at Cardinal Communications. I thought today would be a great time to chat about both of our agencies and for me to understand how you function more specifically in comparison to us.***

***First, what is the overall structure of 6th Street?***

**Mirko:** Our executive staff includes me, the firm director and a communications director, PR director and financial director. We also have three graphic designers, account executives and account associates.

***L: What are the responsibilities of this executive staff?***

**M:** We all work as a team. The communications director focuses on external communication (branding, website creation, logo). The PR director helps out with the firm as a whole. The name doesn't really match the responsibilities of the PR director's job, so it's a bit misleading because she leads the firm a bit more than the other directors, specifically with internal communication. Her title doesn't really describe what she does but that's how it's always been. The financial director deals with all of our finances. He is in charge of billing, budget and coordinating invoices.

Account executives fall underneath me. There are approximately 12 account executives. Two account executives are assigned to one client and then account associates fall underneath them. We have approximately 40 members total.

***L: Where do social media and creative departments fit into your agency?***

M: Our firm provides a variety of services and each strategic plan is unique to its client with some including social media, copywriting, graphic design aspects, etc.

As far as specific creative and social media responsibilities, certain members are better than others at various projects. When we get a new client, we will assess their needs, budget to pay us and existing materials. We will create a comprehensive plan for the project which usually includes social media and sometimes creative. We have certain people who focus more on those “special teams.” Teams are set up with two account executives with five or so account associates under them. Everyone does social media. If someone on the team can handle the graphic design then they will work on that too.

We make sure that the workload isn’t too much on these members with the graphic design skills by taking away the social media aspect if they are focusing on social media. All account associates are either working on designs for a client or social media at any one time.

**L: Are there benefits for upper-level management positions (directors, account supervisors) in your agency?**

M: We don't have any specific benefits to being a part of the firm management, but we do see that individuals who are interested in agency work tend to be more interested in having a management position. It is also important to note that with The PRactice, you get what you put into it and stepping up means doing more work but also getting more recognition and more networking opportunities as well as concrete leadership experience.

We are thinking about making class credit an option, but the members we have now are very interested in doing what they do. The experience is worth more to them than just the class credit. We have never discussed payment.

**L: Do you have a handbook or code of ethics specific to The PRactice? What was your process in creating it?**

M: We have a handbook, which discusses our structure and policies. It also includes a section on ethics, which is taken from PRSA.

All members sign a contract at the beginning of the year. It outlines certain details about attendance such as weekly meeting times and requirements. If someone doesn’t do what they’re supposed to be doing or if the client isn’t happy, we will figure out a way to fix it.

***L: Do you have a faculty advisor to help guide you through tough decisions?***

M: We have a “faculty advisor,” not her official title, but she’s really interested in what we do. She worked at Edelman for a long time. She knows so much about the agency aspect and how to create amazing campaigns. It’s a courtesy to let her know,

**L: What is your hiring process like for new members?**

M: Our hiring process includes an online application for both the AA and AE position, followed by an interview and an introduction to their new account team.

Hiring cycles simply depend on the year. This past year, we hired as needed when we took in new projects. That typically occurred at the beginning of the semester. For next year, we've been trying to get clients already. I already have a pretty solid understanding of when next year's clients will start and stop work, so I think we can hire based on that. We are going to start with a certain number base of members and then we will pull them in as needed.

***L: What is your relationship like with OSU's PRSSA chapter?***

M: In order to be a member of the PRactice, you have to be a member of PRSSA. Our PRSSA chapter has more than 200 members. We use the PRSSA students as our primary recruiting pool both for new members and client support. For example, we had an event for one of our cancer prevention nonprofits recently. We planned the event and did all of the promotions for it, but when it came down to recruiting volunteers, we pulled from PRSSA.

***L: How do you go about getting clients?***

M: Most of our clients come to us. I can only guess where most of them hear about us. I assume a lot of it is word-of-mouth. I know for one of them we used to have another professional organization, so I'm sure that they heard from them about us. Some of the others are from professor connections and then some I just don't know.

The nonprofit clients don't pay anything because there's really no point in it. We wouldn't be able to do the work that we're doing if we charged. Our retail clients do pay though.

***L: Do you have a public relations major or how is your curriculum set up?***

M: We don't have a strictly public relations major. Most of us are part of the Journalism/Strategic Communications program. At Ohio State, strategic communications is mostly public relations. We have a campaigns class as our capstone course.

We don't really have an advertising major at all. If someone is really interested in advertising, then you would major in strategic communications and then just take some extra advertising classes.

***L: Do you have any questions for me?***

M: I was wondering if you had any ideas about how we, as student firm directors, can come together and use each other's experiences as more of a resource?

***L: I think it would be a wonderful opportunity for Ohio State and Ball State to come together and make the first student-run agency either Facebook page or other type of forum. I will put you in contact with next year's firm director, and maybe we can all put something in place for you to implement next fall.***

M: I think that would be a great idea. Thanks for reaching out!

## **APPENDIX C: AAF Interview Transcription**

**Interview between Ashley Cox (MOD), Sarah Mitchem, Austin Vance and Brittany Collins on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2013 at 4 p.m.**

***MOD: Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. As you know, we are excited to join together in the collaborative Holden Communications Center next fall. To get a better understanding of how we can maintain our individual identities and potentially join together on mutually beneficial projects, we wanted to meet with you to better understand your purpose and day-to-day activities.***

***To start, what is the structure of AAF?***

Sarah: I would have to say it's kind of free form. We have structured meetings when it comes to our general meetings on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and our department meetings. But when it comes to our meetings, since we are mostly creative people, it's all brainstorming. It's all talking. It's all being really chill and open. I would say our most serious meeting would have to be our general meetings because that's where the whole organization comes together to talk about business stuff and where we are.

***MOD: How is leadership structured? Is it a tier system? How does the chain of command work?***

Sarah: At the beginning of the year, I would say it's mostly up to the exec board that makes decisions – president, vice president, secretary, fundraising chair and treasurer. But once we conduct interviews, we have a campaign director, creative director and IBP, basically our departments for the campaign we're creating.

The campaign director has more of a say of what goes on when it comes to our campaign and how we run those departments. So it's almost like we have two chunks. We have exec, which deals with the business side. We're the ones that communicate with the department, with our advisors--all of that kind of stuff. Then you have the creative people that actually work on the campaign. And then you have leadership positions within that, like the campaign director, and then they have the creative director, IBP director and research director that works under the campaign director.

***MOD: What's the IBP director?***

Austin: Yeah, that's me. It's integrated brand promotions. We focus on mainly sponsorships and special events that we can help to promote our client in-store, with signage and all that cool stuff. We do social media platforms. Also, guerrilla advertising, so all the fun, cool ads you see out on the street.

Sarah: All of this stuff is for our campaign. It's not stuff that we promote for AAF.

Austin: Yeah, it's stuff for our client. That's pretty much it. And then I guess the creative

team, they will do the print executions that go in the magazines or commercial ideas.

***MOD: How do you hire or elect your new leadership? And when do you do it?***

Sarah: We have nominations for exec team because you have the two leadership roles. We usually start those right after our competition in April. So, like mid-April we start throwing names around. People get nominated. Usually we tell our adviser. Then we let those people know they've been nominated, and they can deny or accept. Then they have interviews with our advisers. Our advisers choose who the exec board is. When it comes to the creative and campaign directors, those are not necessarily nominated. People actually want those positions because they require a lot of work because they work on the campaign all year. Then they go through an interview process as well with our advisers and then the president and the vice president.

***MOD: Sarah, I know you weren't at the meeting, but Dean Lavery talked to us about how to decide who gets card swipes into the new office. I know you pay to be a part of AAF, correct? So how do you decide who is a full-time member and who is just paying to put it on their resume?***

Austin: Really, I think it just comes down to who shows up. It starts as a big bulk of people who pay their dues just to get into the book at the end of the year. But, then it always dwindles down to a select handful of people that are actually coming to every meeting and doing the work. We take attendance at every meeting, so it's easy for us to tell who those kids are.

Sarah: Yeah, I think probably for dealing with that for next year, we can have the members pay and then once you pay you're a member, but I think we would probably want to wait. I don't know how exactly that's going to work if we kind of wait to see who stays. Once you're a paid member, you're a paid member. Your name doesn't necessarily get put into the book, because if you don't do anything for the book, then why should your name be in it? But that just kind of gives you national recognition. So, that way if you're ever in an interview, and somebody asks, "Were you really a member from 2009-2012?" They can actually look it up and see that. So, really the membership fee is for nationals and for you to actually put it on your resume.

***MOD: Yeah, we were basically just wondering if you had any suggestions about how to handle that for next year.***

Brittany: I was thinking about that, and I think you definitely have to be a paid member, or you have to be out of your way participating in order to have a swipe. Dean Lavery mentioned having it open from like 8-5 p.m. Well, I can't say that anyone from our side is going to be in there all that time, I know you guys do more during the day. So, what I was thinking was that between 8 and 5 p.m., everyone who is a paying member, their swipe is activated. Then after a certain point in time, it's only the directors who can open it. So, it'd be the directors and the exec team. That's what I was thinking would be the best idea. It will give people control; Paying members will feel like they have power too.

Then between 8 and 5 p.m., they can feel like this is some place that they do belong--not like we are excluding them.

Austin: Is the swipe just going to be our IDs?

**MOD: Yeah, that's what it is.**

Austin: Is it something you can activate and then deactivate for certain people?

**MOD: Yeah, but that is the thing we are supposed to present--a list at the beginning, so then, like you said, if people stop participating in your organization, then why should they be allowed in?**

Brittany: Which, what they do is, they just have a computer and like somebody's name and ID number, they can pull it up in the computer and deactivate it. So, if the exec team gives a list of 20 people who have never shown up, they don't have a reason to be in here. And if they show up, and they need to communicate with someone else, then you can give that list to them.

Sarah: What if you just did an updated list?

**MOD: Yeah, we were trying to make it simplified, so we weren't going to Arlene every day, like, "Hey, by the way, we need these people."**

Sarah: Yeah, we could do it maybe once a month?

Brittany: I was thinking for the beginning it would only be like exec team has it, and then we would add directors. Then keep it just them until things get going.

Sarah: Yeah there's really no one in our office for the first month and a half. I mean there's exec, just because there's meetings and planning.

Austin: I agree with you as far as the exec team and the directors would be authorized. But maybe we could set some sort of qualifications every week or whatever. Whether it be like attend two meetings, or...

Sarah: And that can just be something we will announce once we start all of our meetings in the beginning. Because we just have general meetings in the beginning, since we haven't started on the campaign yet. So that might be something that we would say, like only your attendance counts, but it will allow you to get into the office.

Austin: So as far as your list goes, I would just say like the directors and the exec team for now at least.

Brittney: So it would be like less than a dozen people, and then after we would wait until a time when we felt comfortable to submit a list with people who we trust and people



who we think deserve it and also who would respect it.

Austin: Is it only available to journalism students?

**MOD: *I think it's only available to AAF and CC members.***

Austin: OK, cool. Even better.

Brittany: Well I think it's kind of supposed to be like the DN. Where, you're supposed to be welcoming and allow other people to come in, because it's that kind of thing. But honestly, no one else is going to be able to get in.

Austin: I remember Dean Lavery being like, "it's going to be so cool. It's going to be the place to be." So I can see a lot of kids wanting to hang out in there just simply due to the way it's going to look.

Sarah: I just don't want to be responsible. Like if something happens during those open hours, you cannot hold us responsible.

Brittany: And then during that open time, like if you have to swipe to get in, even if you're allowed to be in there, then we will also know who was in the room that day. So, it won't just be like an open thing in which it could've been any of the members. Well, these are the members who specifically came in that day.

**MOD: *So how many faculty advisers do you have, or do you work with? We know you have Professor Hanley? But then, we don't know how the other ones work.***

Sarah: We also work with Donna Gray and Professor O'Malley. Donna or O'Malley aren't official advisers, but Donna helps with our creative because she has a creative background. Then Michelle O'Malley helps with research and strategic because that's her background. So usually if we hold interviews, or if we need people to edit our campaign book, we go to those people.

**MOD: *Do they come to any of your meetings or do you just run stuff by them?***

Austin: They don't come to the meetings. Right now what we have been doing is all of the directors meet with Hanley, Donna and O'Malley once a month just to update them on where we're at as far as our concept goes. We show them our print executions and Donna will give them the yay or nay. Then we go from there. Other than the monthly update meeting, it's kind of just through email if needed.

Sarah: It's really us standing on our own and then when we do need advice, or an adviser, we go to them. They try to keep it in our hands.

Austin: A lot of the times it's the campaign director or the creative director who's doing most of the communication with them just because they can relay that information to the

rest of the team.

Sarah: Or myself. I usually just go to his [Professor Hanley] office, because he's always in there. It's nothing real formal.

**MOD: *When are you primarily in the office? I know you said you aren't usually in there the first month.***

Sarah: We have our exec team picked by the end of the spring for the next year so as soon as August hits. The people that are going to be in the office most are the exec team because they're going to be planning for SuperParty--you know how that is. Every semester it's the same stuff. We just get ready for that. We're in there every Thursday at 7/7:30 p.m. for our general meeting. Then once the campaign starts, we usually have a meeting every day. Research is on Mondays, Tuesday is media and Wednesdays is creative and IBP. Those are usually our set times. There are always people in the office working on stuff and just doing whatever, chilling before class or something like that.

Austin: As far as the meetings go, it's usually Monday through Thursday in the evening, I'd say around like 6:30 p.m. at the earliest.

Brittany: Yeah, we have a meeting at 6:30 p.m., but usually not earlier. We accommodate by not meeting in the afternoon.

Austin: There's a lot of late nights that we stay in there especially when it gets to crunch time--a lot of the creative meetings will go from 7-11 p.m.

**MOD: *Do your teams meet once or twice a week, or does it just depend?***

Sarah: Formally, it's once a week. But, if the campaign director and the creative director and maybe like a handful of certain people that are really design heavy have to stay after or work an extra few hours or an extra few days, then that's kind of on them. But, formally we only meet once a week.

**MOD: *Are there any times when you will always need the office? Like, we have a general meeting every month, and while we probably wouldn't do that in the office, that's just an example of something we always do together, every month. I know you said you also have general meetings, but are there any other times you absolutely all have to be there?***

Sarah: Yeah, ours would definitely be every Thursday at either 7 or 7:30 p.m.

**MOD: *How many members would you say are usually in the office during the day?***

Brittany: I feel like it can vary between half a dozen and a dozen and then sometimes maybe like 15.

Austin: Yeah, I know like right now creative and the creative director and the IBP director, me, have been holding meetings together. So, I think that is our biggest handful of kids. I would say it's probably like 25 total. Then, once we split up, like whoever wants to do IBP will come to the IBP meeting and whoever wants to stay creative will stay creative.

Sarah: Research meetings are usually small—usually six or seven. Media is the same.

Austin: Not a lot of people like to do that stuff.

Sarah: But, creative and IBP are always bigger. And then general is when we all come together. So, I would say there's closer to 25 or 30 people.

**MOD: So, then just like general traffic in the office you'd probably say is like a dozen?**

Austin: Oh, not even, I'd say there's like less than ten. There are a lot of people who like to work in the office. I know I can get work done in there.

Sarah: I'm rarely in the office during my free time, just because I'm always running somewhere. I'd say there's like five people constantly in there.

Brittany: I think a lot of it depends. Like last year, our exec team was really close, and they all lived together. They were constantly in the office. But this year, we're all separate, doing our own things. Like we all have jobs, or separate commitments. I would say it varies.

**MOD: Do you have a policy about guests?**

Brittany: We're pretty welcoming.

Austin: I don't think we have a policy. Not a lot of guests come in.

Brittany: Maybe like a boyfriend stops by or a girlfriend. Nobody ever stays. Everybody is always scared.

Austin: It's never like random people coming to hang out. Like if we're in there we're doing something. We're not just there to hang out. Plus, I feel like people just know that room is an organization or something.

**MOD: So, what do you normally do in a year? Like if you had to do a year in review or a portfolio for this year, what would it look like?**

Austin: Our final project is our book that we will present at our competition.

Sarah: Yeah, it's an entire campaign. So, it's a book about twenty pages long. It was bigger, but this year they cut it down. A lot of changes were made this year.

Brittany: It affects us and how our meetings run. We didn't have meetings until a lot later this year because we didn't have client info. Then they also decided our book was due a lot sooner this year, so that is also going to effect the end of the year. It also depends on how we will use the office as well. Which, we don't know.

Sarah: But generally, our work is that campaign book. We'll have poster competitions here and there like we worked with Card. Comm. for that internship panel poster.

Austin: Like through the year, I know it's basically a lot of fundraising, and then there is, I'm speaking from a creative perspective, because that's what I do ... We'll start with taglines and then go to concept, sketches and execution--all until we build the creative department. And then media does the same thing. They work with research to find out the questions that we want answered. Then we have a handful of kids that work on the design of the book itself and then it's finished. So, it's kind of all departments but then it comes together. It's starting to come together now, which is really when we shift into gear and start putting the book together.

***MOD: OK, so how does the competition itself work?***

Sarah: Usually it's in Detroit every year. But this year it's actually closer to Chicago, in Merriville. It is a national competition, but our district is just the surrounding states. We go up against 22 or 23 other schools, which have the same client. We get judged on our book and our presentation. So we have a presentation made and we usually have things to bring to show like printed ads, billboards and videos

Austin: We pitch our campaign to the client. So there's a representative from Glidden there and SACH, the organization that puts on the competition. They have other people with a name in the industry. I know last year, they had a big wig that worked with Jose Cuervo. I'm sure this year there will be someone from Walmart and Glidden. We pitch to them, and they pick the one that they like best. Then the winner gets a bunch of money and the losers gets heartbroken.

Brittany: It's a sad bus ride home for a lot of people. For a lot of people it's a lot of happiness and meeting other people and having a good time.

Austin: It goes from a really fun, laid back, casual atmosphere where everyone is like hanging out, drinking or whatever.

Sarah: There's a brief moment of really intense competition and they announce it and it goes...ehhh.

***MOD: I know you briefly mentioned earlier some things about fundraising, but what kind of fundraising do you do?***

Brittany: I'm the fundraising director. This year we've been struggling. The client we've

worked with in the past the most has been Doc's Music Hall, and as you know, there is no Doc's right now. So we've been coming up with creative ways to do stuff. Unfortunately, there's just a lot of businesses that can't really do anything. But we are open to doing a lot of stuff. We do distribution of posters around campus, social media, inviting people to events and making them aware of new businesses, just like word of mouth. The stuff that we get paid for would be the distribution of posters, design, just any service we can provide. The Girl Scouts want to do stuff on campus, so next month we're going to set up booths. The way that it's a fundraiser is that they pay us to be at the booths. So really in any way that we can help them, which will also help us.

***MOD: So how does that work? Do you go looking for them, or do they come to you?***

Brittany: I work at the Chamber of Commerce, so I have a lot of contacts. I sit down and I'm like who needs to make more money and then I go and take their money in an attempt to make them more money. We've also done email marketing. We've started doing that this year. The clients haven't really been in contact with me about sending out emails, and I am exhausted from harassing them. It's really anything that we can think up of at all.

Brittany: It's kind of weird because we talk about having clients and then we talk about the client. Fundraising is kind of like an organization within an organization, which is what I've been trying to do. In my classes I came up with a new name for us, which is "Business Connection." I'm putting in a lot of stuff for us and really trying to launch it. I plan on having this position next year. As far as I know, I'm the only person that's wanted to have it for two years and really try to make a solid foundation of it. So, that way, people of the future will be able to make money and have contacts and do all of this other stuff coming into it and not have to be like a sitting duck and not know where to start. I'm trying to build something nice and solid that we can rely on.

Sarah: That's why our fundraising chair is usually considered part of our exec team because she's a boss.

Austin: She makes all the money, so we can print the executions.

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